SPRING SUNSHINE

In the morning Scotty watched April showers trickling down the windows. The beads of water did not run straight down the glass; one drop followed another down down twisty paths. The glass all looked the same to Scotty, and he wondered if the water could see something invisible to him. Perhaps the shining beads wanted to avoid the places where swallows had bumped the glass last summer. The swallows had not come back yet this spring [] but, a few feet beyond the wet glass, two big robins listened to the lawn. Scotty wondered how anything could hear a worm. Behind the robins, raindrops dimpled the spring creek as if fish were feeding.

Then Scotty saw that Hanyin was awake. Hanyin was Scotty's Indian friend, and he had enough sense to sleep late when it was wet outside. He slept on the floor with his head to the north because he was of the People tribe. At least, that was how he explained it, and he could explain most important things, if only Scotty could understand the explanations. Hanyin would not explain things that did not matter. He never said "good morning," because anyone could see that, and he never said when he was leaving or arriving, because that was obvious too.

"Let's throw a ball." Those were Hanyin's first words of the day.

"Mom says no ball-throwing in the house," Scotty argued, but he didn't argue very hard. Hanyin just looked at him. No one but Scotty could see or hear Hanyin. Under those circumstances, Hanyin did not see why he should pay much attention to Mom.

"Well, I guess we could roll a ball," Scotty said.

"Oh, yes, please," Trooper said. You can roll it anywhere and I'll retrieve it for you. Trooper was wagging his stubby tail so hard that his whole back end wiggled. Everybody could see Trooper, but only Scotty and Hanyin could hear him talk.

So Hanyin rolled the ball, gently. Trooper caught it and brought it back before it could roll far.

Then Scotty rolled the ball harder. It rolled out the bedroom door, into the hall, and -- after hitting the wall -- into the kitchen. At least, the ball mostly rolled. Perhaps it bounced a little.

Trooper tried to catch the ball quickly. He tried so hard that his hind feet slipped on the tile floor. For a moment Trooper was running fast without actually moving, and Scotty laughed. Then Trooper made it to the kitchen and caught the ball, but on the way he knocked over an African violet. Some dirt spilled out of the pot. It did not make much of a mess, really, because the plant's roots held the soil together, but the violet looked unhappy on the floor.

Mom came from the kitchen with a broom. "No ball-throwing in the house"! she said.

"Hanyin wanted to," Scotty explained.

"I didn't tell you to bounce it," said Hanyin, but of course Mom couldn't hear that.

"Time for you guys to play outside," she said. And when Scotty looked, he saw that the shower had stopped and the breeze was trying to blow a rainbow off the Bridger range. The mountains were white and the valley below them was green. The sun was drying the grass. In Montana, the sun is very bright, and it does not take long to dry things.

"Take me," yelped Trooper.

"Take Trooper," said Mom. Maybe she can hear Trooper talk sometimes after all.

First Scotty and Hanyin walked across the grass to the footbridge and looked over. Trooper ran in big circles with his tongue hanging out. Then he came to the bridge and looked over too. There is always something to see from a bridge, especially when the water is clear, with watercress starting to grow along the sides and shadows waving down deep. But Hanyin stayed still, waiting longer than Scotty wanted. When something happened, it was not what Scotty expected.

A light cloud drifted over the sun, the air grew a little cooler, and a sound came from everywhere at once. It was a sort of boom-boom-boom-boom-boom, but booms are usually loud and these were soft: so soft that you could not hear them except in a quiet

place. Scotty looked for the sound-maker but did not see him till he followed Hanyin's eyes. Hanyin was watching a bird shaped like an arrowhead swooping over the meadow. The bird would climb high on slender wings -- so high that he almost disappeared against the wispy clouds -- and then he would turn into an arrowhead again and dive. The sound would drift down a moment later.

"What is it"? Scotty asked.

"A snipe. He's winnowing," Hanyin explained.

"What does it mean"?

To get an answer, Scotty had to follow Hanyin's eyes again, and Hanyin was looking down. Scotty could see no connection between stream and snipe. But one of the shadows in the current now moved smoothly upstream.

"A fish"! Scotty whispered.

"A log," muttered Trooper.

"A trout," Hanyin said. "Logs can't move against the current."

"It's just a shadow to me," Trooper sniffed. If I can't smell it, it must be a shadow. I can smell <u>everything</u>.

"Dad should be here," Scotty wished. "He could catch it and you could have the bones. You wouldn't talk about shadows then."

Upstream a few yards, a dimple appeared on the smooth surface of the stream, and then another and another. This time there was no rain, so the dimples had to be made by a trout: perhaps the same trout from under the bridge, or perhaps another.

"I wish I could catch one," Scotty said.

"All right," Hanyin answered.

Scotty did not understand. "We don't have any fishing rods and things," he said.

"Neither did my people," Hanyin replied.

"Please show me," Scotty said, but he didn't have to. Hanyin was already walking upstream, peering at the water. Scotty followed him, trying to be quiet, and even Trooper tried to be more quiet than usual. It wasn't easy for him, but he was thinking of the way bones and heads taste after trout have been grilled over the fire and Mom and Dad and Scotty have eaten the soft, tasteless pieces.

The three walked softly up two bends of the stream before Hanyin saw what he wanted. Scotty couldn't see it well, but he glimpsed a shadow waving in the water near the other bank of the stream. Trooper could see it too, and he stood very still and stiff. Hanyin dropped to his knees and crept to the bank. Scotty said "ssssh" because he didn't know what else to do.

SMOSH went Trooper, jumping into the river before anyone could stop him. Waves splashed the banks and spray covered Hanyin. Trooper thought he knew exactly what to do. "I'll retrieve 'im," he howled, and he plunged up the stream, half swimming and half running. But the trout did not want to be retrieved and was not as easy to catch as Scotty's rubber ball. When Trooper reached the place where the shadow had been, it wasn't there anymore.

"Dumb fish anyhow," Trooper grumbled while climbing out on the bank and shaking more cold water on the other two. "Doesn't smell and won't play."

Scotty was thinking up a way to explain to Trooper what a blunder he'd made, but Hanyin spoke first. "Trooper," he said, "I think I saw a pheasant run into those buffaloberries. Why don't you go look for it"?

"Pheasant"? asked Trooper. "Pheasant! <u>There's</u> something that knows how to smell"! And he bounded off over the wheatgrass,[] headed for the tall, olive-green buffaloberry bushes.

The other two hiked further up the stream to a place where the current started singing instead of whispering. Hanyin stopped there and slowly knelt down. Scotty knelt too. "Where"? he asked.

Hanyin pointed with his eyes to the place where a riffle ran into the pool. A pool is a place where the stream is deep, quiet, and flat on the surface. A riffle is shallow, with rocks on the bottom and wavelets on the top. The water riffling over rocks is what makes the singing sound. Trout love the spot where song turns into whisper.

And that is where Scotty saw the trout, finning slowly just downstream of a large rock. Scotty watched so hard that he was barely aware of Hanyin slipping into the water and wading toward the fish. (Mom cannot see Hanyin, so he never worries about getting his trousers and mocassins wet.)

No one could have moved more gently than Hanyin, but the

trout saw him anyhow and swam under the rock. Only the tip of a large tail remained, curling gently. Hanyin reached it, knelt down -- even his shirt was getting wet now -- and touched the trout's tail. Scotty thought he could hear Hanyin singing something, but perhaps it was only the song of the spring creek. Hanyin touched the bottom of the big tail, then moved his fingers slowly forward, stroking the trout's stomach. Finally his hand tightened and he lifted the fish out.

"Hey," said the trout, "that tickled. How are you, anyhow?"

"Fine," Hanyin answered. "I'm glad that you are so fat, old one."

"It's the springs, you know," the trout explained. "They never let the stream get too cold. I laid a lot of eggs and that did make me feeble for a while, but I've been snacking all winter on lovely midges. The riffle brings them floating right down to my place here. Now the mayflies are out. There's nothing as tasty as a mayfly."

"May I hold her?" asked Scotty.

"No thanks," said the trout. "Hanyin knows how to do it without squeezing. And I hate to mention it, but this sun is drying me out. If you don't mind . . . ."

"All right," said Hanyin. "Have a fat season, old friend, and watch out for the heron." Then he slipped the trout back into water and held her upright till she swam out of his fingers. She went back under the rock, and this time not even her tail stuck out.

"I guess she wants a little privacy," Scotty said. "We couldn't eat that one." But he sounded disappointed.

"That was one of my ancestors," Hanyin explained, and Scotty knew it was all the explanation he would get. "But," Hanyin added, "let's go get a trout that doesn't talk."

And they did. It was just below the next riffle. Hanyin stopped and watched, but Scotty could not see the fish. Then a mayfly came floating down, fragile in the sun. The trout sipped it in with a little slurp, much the way Scotty eats smoked oysters. Now Scotty spotted the shadow underneath. He was learning that trout don't look like trout till they come out of the water.

This trout ran into a muskrat hole instead of under a rock. The tail was visible, though, so Scotty lay flat on the bank, smelling grass and mud, and slipped his arm into the water. The trout wiggled a little and its skin was slippery, but it let Scotty run his fingers under the belly. Scotty was careful not to touch the fish's side, because that is where it is most sensitive. Then Scotty tightened his hand around the bulge behind the trout's head.

This fish did not talk, so they took it home for dinner. Scotty knew that Mom would be proud, and that she would grill the trout and serve it with new little potatoes and melted butter. There might be a peppery watercress salad from the stream, too, but Scotty would not eat much of that.

Scotty would have liked to carry the trout, but he let Trooper do it. Trooper insisted that he was, after all, the only one of the three who was trained to retrieve. He may have enjoyed the taste a little but he was gentle, and his teeth did not break the trout's skin.

On the way back Scotty's shirt dried out, almost. The Montana sun is really very strong. Even Trooper had run enough that he was content to walk along proudly, now, head and tail of the trout sticking out on each side of his mouth. He could not talk much with his mouth full, of course, so Scotty explained to him exactly how to tickle a trout. Hanyin strolled along quietly, smiling.

SECRET CITY

The Spanish Peaks looked close and friendly and, especially, cool. Scotty knew that they were farther than he could walk, even if he were to walk three days. He knew that they were wild, and wild is not always friendly. But he was sure that they were as cool as they looked because their tops were white with snow. Down in the valley it was hot in the sun but just warm in the shade of a cottonwood tree, where Scotty and Hanyin leaned their backs ~~up~~ against rough bark. They looked up at the blue and white mountains and ran their hands through grass baked as yellow as the sun.

The grass squeaked as Hanyin pulled a stalk and chewed on its blunt, shiny end. Scotty looked for a chewing stem too. Not just any would do: the tall, tanned stalks would come out by their roots. The short green shoots had no real stalk at all. But Scotty found a stalk that was still partly green, as tall as his knee, and waving under a head of new seeds that fanned out like a miniature spruce tree. This stalk pulled in half with another squeak. The thick, bottom half stayed in the ground, an empty case. The part Scotty chewed had been growing inside its case

like a sword in its scabbard. This grass -- cured by the afternoon sun but still moist -- had a taste both sweet and sour. The taste was the kind that fed thoughts, not hunger. Scotty was inclined to think about the little low country of leafhoppers and ladybugs. Hanyin took him higher.

"My people used to go up there in the summer," he said. Scotty knew that he was talking about the meadows below the white-tipped peaks.

"Wasn't it a long trip?" Scotty asked.

"Not with horses. They liked to get up there, away from the flies. The game liked it too. We followed the deer and elk. There was nothing else we had to do."

Of course both Scotty and Hanyin were thinking how nice it would be up there, with nothing they had to do except follow the animals. Neither mentioned it for a while.

"Maybe Dad would take us," Scotty said, but he wasn't sure. Dad always had lots to do.

But Dad may have been looking at the peaks too, because he agreed quickly. He put a fishing rod and waders in the car. Mom brought the cook kit. Then they all got in the car, or at least Mom and Dad and Hanyin and Scotty got in the car. Grocery stayed home because he likes grass better than trout streams. Trooper stayed home, but not because he liked it. Any trip would have suited Trooper, but trout and Trooper do not get along. He loves to run right up the middle of little trout streams, water sloshing

out on the banks. After this, trout hide for a long time.

The mountains are not far by car. After a few minutes, though, Mom said "we'll be pretty hungry by the time we get there and catch some trout to cook." So they pulled into the cheese factory for a snack. The cheese looked good, but on a hot day the ice cream looked better. Twelve tubs of it, with different flavors marked, sat inside a glass-topped freezer. A sign read "Small Cones 50 Medium 75 Large $1.00." Mom ordered a small cone for everyone. Scotty told the woman behind the counter what he wanted, and she carved scoops out of the hard ice cream: one each of Butter Pecan, Pistacchio, Chocolate, Butter Pecan again, and Fudge Ripple. He had trouble finishing it all off before the ice cream melted on the car seats, even with Hanyin sharing licks. Dad guessed it was just as well they hadn't ordered the large size. Mom said that, anyhow, they wouldn't be needing lunch.

Scotty was still chasing drippy spots with his tongue when they turned off onto a gravel road and began climbing toward the mountains. The air ~~turned~~ became cooler and the grass turned from sun-tanned yellow to a color that was, Mom said, almost like Ireland, though of course not quite as green. Scotty would have liked to stop and roll in that grass.

Above the grassy valleys, the mountain turned blue-green with pines and firs,then white with the snow. The sky turned from deep blue to a billowy grey, and thunder sounded from somewhere behind the mountain. Mom said she wondered why Dad wanted to go

fishing under the only rain-cloud in Montana.

"The mountains make their own weather," Hanyin said to Scotty.

"Don't worry," Dad said. "The trout won't mind getting wet." But the people wanted to stay dry, so they sat in the car and watched a shower battering a big pool on the stream. Rain poured down the windshield so fast that Dad had to run the wipers to see out. He watched intently. When Mom told him to relax, Dad said that the trout were going to rise all over the creek when the rain stopped, and he didn't want to miss it.

The thunder sounded more distant soon, and there were no lightning flashes nearby. Rain trickled down the windshield rather than pouring. Dad ~~put on~~ wiggled into his hip boots and rain jacket ~~in~~ without leaving the car, then hopped outside, put his fishing rod together, and tied on a fly. Mom wondered why he wanted to get wet.

"This is dry rain," he said. Only a few raindrops were still freckling the water as he began casting. Scotty ran down to the pool when Dad's rod bent and a trout splashed. Dad was standing knee-deep in gentle current while the fish, tired now, swirled close by. Dad pulled it into a little landing-net and, without lifting the net from the water, brought the trout to the bank for Scotty to see.

"That's the kind we used to catch," said Hanyin.

Dad held the fish's head upstream so it could breathe. It pumped water in at the mouth and out at the gills. The trout was

pale orange and silver, with hundreds of black spots about the size of a match-head. Dad showed Scotty how to put a finger gently in the trout's mouth, against sharp little teeth, and push its tongue down. Then Scotty could see bright, crimson blotches under the jaw.

"That's a native cutthroat," said Dad, "and she's a good one for this little stream."

"Will we eat her?" Scotty asked.

"No," Dad said. "She'll be full of eggs next spring. We'll try to catch some little brook trout. There's too many of them in here." Then he slipped the fly from the the old cutthroat's lip and released her without ever lifting her from the water. She moved slowly off.

By now the shower was only a rumbly memory over some other mountain. The sky was a very deep blue over ridges bristling with lodgepole pines. Mom stepped out of the car, she said, to see the grass growing greener.

With no clouds to help now, Dad thought that the fishing would not be good near the road. So everybody hiked upstream. The creek curved off through a meadow sprinkled with [] spruces and groves of quaking aspen. In the breeze that had chased the rain away, aspen leaves fluttered and shimmered on thin stems, pale undersides flashing. Hanyin showed Scotty where a few huckleberries grew close to the stream. Huckleberries are as good as ice cream but they come in pinches, not scoops. Scotty put a few in his pocket for Mom and Dad.

Hanyin was peering toward a rocky slope above the meadow. "What are you looking for?" Scotty asked.

"I used to know a grizzly who lived up there," said Hanyin.

Scotty didn't know whether he wanted to become acquainted with a real grizzly bear. As soon as Hanyin mentioned it, however, Scotty felt sure that the bear was somewhere on the mountain. The peak had something that he had felt already, but not understood. Mountain and bear fit together.

Right then a huckleberry bush a few yards away shook and seemed to explode. Scotty jumped. He hoped hard that the bear would remember his old friend Hanyin. But the creature that flopped out from behind the bush was a grey-brown hen grouse: big as birds go but not scary once you saw what she was. Something had hurt her, and she could neither run nor fly well. Scotty wanted to take her home, and Dad, for once, said "sure, go get 'er."

So Scotty did. At least, he tried. Somehow, though, she always managed to stay a foot or two in front of him as both stumbled across the meadow. At its edge, she flew away, looking perfectly healthy, and Scotty knew that he had been tricked by a mother grouse leading him away from her chicks.

Hanyin knew where the chicks were, but Dad would not let Scotty search for them. "Let's get out of here," he said, "so we don't step on them." Everybody skidded down to the stream on a bank covered by pine needles.

The creek had been greedy, carving out a flat space wider than its waters now needed. This, Dad said, happened during the run-offs every spring, when most of the snow melted from the peaks. There was enough water, though, to keep the springs fresh and the stream cool enough for trout all summer. Willows were trying their best to fill up the flood plain the stream had carved when it was big and dark. There were so many willows now that it was hard for the people to push through except right at the creek's edge.

As Mom and Dad and Hanyin and Scotty squeezed through, there was another thrashing sound and a thump too loud to be made by a grouse. Scotty could hear his heart thumping, too. Then two mule deer in their red summer coats bounced across the stream and up a steep bank on the far side. Mule deer cannot actually run. When they are in a hurry they act as if all four legs are pogo sticks, taking great bounces from one foothold to another. This looks like a hard way of getting around, but it lets the deer cover rough ground faster than almost any other animal. Both of these deer were does. They probably had fawns hidden nearby. At the top of the far bank, they stopped to see if anyone was looking for their little ones, and no one was.

Dad and Mom had rubber boots that came up to their hips. Scotty had only tennis shoes, which he tried to keep dry by jumping from rock to rock. His feet were wet soon, and then he splashed in the water as much as he wanted to. So did Hanyin, in his mocassins, when he was not disappearing to look for the

grizzly or some other old acquaintance.

It was easy for Scotty to forget how warm he had been that morning, thousands of feet [] lower in altitude. The water was cool and the air comfortable. Except for the strong sun, he would have been chilly. Down there in the running water with willows on one side and evergreens on the other, the world seemed small and secret. The only distant view was of the peaks above. A raven looked down and croaked. For fishing, of course, a secret feeling is just right. You don't want the trout to know you are there. You don't say much about the good spots to other fishermen, either.

Mom and Dad took turns with the fishing rod. Scotty loved to see the long, brown line flicker in the air and set a small fly made of feathers on the water upstream. At first, though, the trout paid no attention. Then Dad pulled something off a willow leaf and showed it to Scotty. It was a big yellow insect with wings folded flat on top of its body, and its legs scrambled as it ran back and forth over Scotty's hand. Dad called it a stonefly and was already tying on an artificial fly that looked like it.

Three casts later a trout took the new fly with a splash and came struggling in. Dad let Scotty hold the rod. The fish pulled hard, then grew tired and let Scotty skid it up on the rocks. It had a dark green back and fins with red stripes. Scotty knew that it was a brook trout, and he gave it to Dad to keep for dinner.

Scotty wanted to catch something by himself then. He found little frogs on the warm stones -- frogs that had been tadpoles just a few days earlier. These he could get, after both boy and frog had made a few hops. He looked at each frog for awhile before turning it loose gently, as Dad had turned loose the big trout.

Then Mom showed Scotty some sculpins. They were very hard to see: fish the size of a finger, but with broad froggy heads and very big fins at each side. Their color was exactly the same as that of the mottled brown rocks on the bottom of the creek. When Scotty tried to catch a sculpin, it did not swim like a trout but just darted to another rock. The sculpins were harder to catch than they looked, and they got away. Dad said they'd make some big trout even fatter.

Scotty was sure that Hanyin would know how to catch sculpins, but that thought made Scotty realize that Hanyin hadn't been around for awhile. This wasn't surprising -- Hanyin always appeared without saying a word and disappeared when he thought of something better to do -- but he usually didn't disappear for long when they were doing something good. Scotty guessed that Hanyin must have found something even better than frogs and sculpins. There was no point looking or calling, because Hanyin would let him know when the time was right, and not before. And Scotty hoped that what Hanyin found would not be a grizzly.

Not far upstream a little waterfall cascaded over a soft, grassy bank. That was peculiar. As a rule, you only find

waterfalls in rocky places; running water wears down soft earth. Scotty knew that this fall could not have been there long, and he climbed up the bank to see what had caused it. Hanyin sat there, waiting as if he had known exactly what Scotty would do.

"Come on," said Hanyin, and he pushed into the willows, following the new little sidestream. Scotty followed too, but it was hard going. The little stream had no bed -- it just ran on the ground through the dense bushes. Then Scotty and Hanyin came out on the bank of a tiny pond. At the end of the pond, Scotty saw a dam of willow sticks. It could have been built only by beavers. The dam had blocked the old stream channel, raising the water's level till it made a pond and trickled out the side, forming the puzzling new stream the boys had followed. Scotty and Hanyin walked up beside the pond to another dam and yet another, the biggest. The beavers had worked everywhere in the flat part of the valley, building a city hidden in the willows.

Hanyin walked out on the dam at the bottom of the biggest pond. The whole dam -- perhaps five feet tall and forty feet wide -- had been built of slender willow sticks. The beaver builders were hiding now; the only animals in sight were small trout at the bottom of the pond, and they too fled, leaving behind small puffs of mud in the clear water.

Hanyin stood on the dam and waited. Scotty knew that he should stand still too, though he did not know why. The boys waited perhaps five minutes, though it seemed like an hour to

Scotty, and he found it difficult not to fidget. Hanyin smiled and Scotty followed his eyes. Hanyin was watching a great mound of sticks heaped up in the middle of the pond. Near it a small object broke the surface and gradually rose higher. Scotty could now see the nose and round back of a beaver. Other noses and backs appeared, and soon four beavers were swimming on the pond. They watched a moment and then swam to the dam. Scotty hoped they would talk but these, it seemed, were not talking animals.

They were working animals, though. Scotty watched them chew down willows and swim with the sticks to the dam, nearly at his feet. Then they wedged the sticks in a place where water was pouring through a low spot in the dam. "Grizzly," said Hanyin. Scotty had to think about that. When he looked at the place the beavers were mending, he saw that only something very strong could have torn apart the wedged sticks and packed mud.

"Why did the bear want to do that?" Scotty asked.

"The beavers have to repair their dam," Hanyin explained, "and the bear thought he could come back today and catch them."

"Will he try?" asked Scotty.

"Not till we leave, maybe," said Hanyin.

Scotty looked at the willows on both sides. He didn't think he could push through them very fast, and he wasn't even sure that he knew exactly which direction to run for the main creek. But Hanyin did not seem worried.

Another head and back appeared in the pond, and a beaver

crawled up on the big lodge in the middle of the water. The new beaver looked bigger than the others.

Hanyin walked off the dam now, and then pushed through the willows on the side of the pond. Scotty followed. When they got as near as possible to the big lodge -- with the beaver still sitting quietly on top of it -- Hanyin waded into the water. Scotty still followed because Hanyin seemed to expect that he would. But the water came up to their chins while they were still fifty feet from the lodge. Hanyin and Scotty swam to the lodge and crawled on top with the beaver. Though they were very wet, Scotty felt safer here.

"It's been ~~a very~~ too long ~~time~~," said the beaver. He was indeed big as beavers go -- perhaps as heavy as the boys, though shorter and fatter.

"Too long," repeated ~~said~~ Hanyin. It was in the summer when we had twenty teepees here. "How are you?"

"I am well," said the beaver, "but sometimes I grow weary of this."

"It looks nice," said Scotty, and then he felt uncomfortable, for the big beaver turned and looked at him quietly.

"It is nice," said the old animal, "now. But you could not know. There are many beavers and many willows. Next year there will be more beavers and less willows. They work hard, those fellows -- I give them that -- but they have a lot of babies. The

new beavers must have willow bark to eat, too. In time there will be no willows and many beavers. This place will turn into a meadow, with grass. We can't eat grass. We can't make dams with it. We must try to find another place -- those of us who can. Many will die. It will take a long time to build another city."

Then the big beaver was quiet, while his eyes searched the shores. When he spoke again, he said: "But you do not need to worry about that, little man. Would you two like to come into the lodge?"

Scotty did not know what to say. He saw no way in.

"You have to dive and swim up a tunnel," Hanyin said.

Scotty was a good swimmer, and curious, but a swim into an underwater tunnel did not sound like fun.

Then his mind was made up for him. A sound louder than a rifle shot broke the small stillness of the pond. Scotty knew that it was the alarm signal a beaver made by slapping its ~~great~~ flat tail on the surface of the water. All of the beavers working on the dam dived into the water, and the big beaver and Hanyin slipped off the lodge. Scotty followed.

The big beaver dived. Hanyin and Scotty took deep breaths and followed. They dove to the bottom of the pond, then swam into a narrow opening in the bottom of the lodge and up through a narrow passage. It was not far, but it was tight, and boys aren't as good as beavers at swimming in tight places. Scotty was very glad to get air when he emerged in the lodge.

Inside, it seemed entirely dark at first, but as Scotty's

eyes adapted, he could see the tiniest ray of light coming in through an air hole. There was enough space for the two boys and the beaver to sit, though of course the boys could not stand. Scotty was a little cold in his wet clothing, and the big beaver saw him shaking.

"Shouldn't be long," the beaver said in a comforting voice.

"What is it?" Scotty asked.

"I suppose it's the bear again," said the beaver. "I don't know why he doesn't go catching rockchucks up on the mountains, like every other grizzly at this time of the year."

The lodge creaked, then, as something very large crawled up on top of it. Dried mud began to fall inside, and the boys could hear sticks being ripped off the top.

"Can he get in?" Scotty whispered.

"I don't suppose so," said the beaver. "At least, he can't when the dried mud is frozen."

More mud fell, and some of it turned to dust. Scotty coughed. The mud was definitely not frozen.

There was a little splash, and Hanyin was not there. Scotty felt very lonely, even with the beaver for company.

"He's gone to have a word with the bear," said the beaver, and that helped a lot. In a moment the noise stopped, though a big weight still moved around on top of the lodge. Then nothing seemed to happen for a long time, and though Scotty thought he heard voices, very faintly.

"It's all right now," said the big beaver. "I'm sorry your stay couldn't have been more quiet. Here, I'll give you a push."

The swim back to daylight was easier, because the push got Scotty out of the tunnel, ~~and then swimming to the top was easy.~~ Hanyin was sitting on topof the lodge, wet and boisterous.

"I had a good talk with my old friend," Hanyin laughed. He said he was getting too grey and fat to spend his time digging out little bitty gophers." Scotty felt giggly too, but he wanted to see Mom and Dad, and he didn't know what they would say about his wet clothes. At least the mud came off during their swim back to shore.

Mom had turned back to look for Scott, and she was worried when she saw how wet he was. Dad was a little ways upstream, fishing, and seemed as happy as Hanyin. "Hey," he said, you don't have to go diving to catch sculpins."

"It was a grizzly," Scott explained.

"Did you see it?"

"No," Scotty answered truthfully.

"Oh well, then, that's all right."

Mom had dry clothes in the car, as mothers of little boys usually do, and she insisted that Scotty change. He did, and it felt good, though Hanyin didn't seem to mind his wet deerskins. There were enough small trout for dinner. Dad knew of an open pebble beach where there was no danger of starting a forest fire, and where next spring's high water would remove any trace of ashes.

Scotty gathered small sticks -- no thicker than matches -- from the dead lower limbs of a spruce, where no rain had reached. They caught fire at the first touch of a flame. Then came large spruce sticks that crackled and smelled of resin. Finally logs of sun-dried driftwood made a campfire that would give a trout good flavor. The fire felt good, because the sun had dropped behind a ridge and the breeze rustling the aspens had turned cool.

Mom salted the fish, greased them with the wrapper from a stick of butter, and put them in a folding wire grill. Potatoes and onions wrapped in foil cooked under the flames. When the wood burned down to coals, Dad balanced the grill over them on two big rocks. The trout were done and smelling good in ten minutes. Scotty opened his on a tin plate and took out the bones. The grill, now empty of fish, went back on the fire to toast brown home-made bread. Scotty ate two fish, four slices of buttered toast, and an apple. Then Dad made tea on the coals in an old, black billy-can and Scotty had a little, with milk. He put a few new sticks on the fire and everyone sat around it.

The sky turned as red as the stripe on a brook trout's fin. The pines up on the ridge stood in the sunset like spines on a porcupine. Somewhere up there a coyote yipped in excitement, and Dad said the rabbit he was chasing was the only one who wasn't having fun. Then he said: "by golly, I bet there <u>is</u> a bear up there somewhere."

It was nice to know that the mountain still had its grizzly,

especially when Scotty was in the car on the way home.

I think this is good.
A-